

4th International Congress on Biodiversity
“Man, Natural Habitats and Euro-Mediterranean
Biodiversity”, Malta, 17-19th November 2017

Global seafood markets: challenges and solutions for consumers

Venera FERRITO
University of Catania, Italy

Human activities in and around the oceans are affecting the health of ocean ecosystems. In particular, the exploitation of natural resources such as fishing, likely has the greatest anthropogenic impact on the world's marine ecosystems. Global fish landings decreased in the last 50 years in all countries due to continuous overfishing. Indeed, in the major fishing areas, as fishing intensity increased, catch per unit area of fishing effort has correspondingly decreased.

The decline of resource abundance is evident in the Mediterranean area where fisheries resources are at risk from overexploitation considering that 78% of fish stocks are fully exploited and the percentage of developing stocks is decreasing linearly with time. Nevertheless, global consumption of seafood products is on the rise, entailing the expansion of resource extraction and production from previously unexplored areas.

Europe represents the largest market of imported seafood products, both frozen and fresh, with fish alone representing almost 20% of these products. In 2015, the European trade deficit was 6 billion euro more than the United States' deficit and 7 billion euro more than the Japanese one. In this context, increasing globalisation of fish markets presents several challenges that include food safety, environmental sustainability and the so called 'buyer social responsibility'. Food safety is a major concern for European Union member states, since protecting consumers' health is the main objective of the European Food Safety Authority Strategy 2020. Environmental sustainability strives for systems which safeguard the ecosystem while maintaining economically viable fisheries. Finally, people are becoming increasingly aware of the social and environmental consequences of their consumption patterns. The uptake of more responsible consumption could have marketing, management and policy implications.